

PRESENTATION DOCRWAYS offering hospitality to the world



Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Associates | Dubuque, Iowa | Spring 2025



PUBLISHED TRIANNUAL by the Sisters of the Presentation 2360 Carter Road Dubuque, Iowa 52001-2997 USA Phone: 563-588-2008 Fax: 563-588-4463 Email: info@dbqpbvms.org Website: www.dbqpbvms.org

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PURPOSE

The purpose of Presentation Doorways is to further the mission of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our associates by sharing the news and views of the congregation with our partners, families and friends. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and to invite others to become involved in our mission.

Your THOUGHTS & COMMENTS

We invite your input. Please send or email photos, stories and information about our sisters, associates, former members, family and friends, or any ideas which relate to the purpose of this publication. Submit to:

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The doorways represented on the cover are snapshots of significant doors in the Presentation history and present day ministries: (Left to right) Doorway of Hotel Hope, a nonprofit hotel for homeless women and children in New Orleans, Louisiana; Doorway of St. Vincent's Academy (now St. Columbkille) in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1879; Doorway of Céad Míle Fáilte (100,000 Welcomes) located on the property of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of Casa Betania, home for retreats and a gathering space for students in Tarija, Bolivia.

PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

Sisters of the Presentation | Spring 2025 | Volume 69 • Number 1



Path Through the Dark

In celebration of their 150th anniversary, the Sisters of the Presentation hosted a captivating, one-person theatrical performance that brought to life the inspiring story of their foundress Nano Nagle.

6 Our Dubuque Foundation

The Presentation history is a shared story – sacred and collective – grounded in the heritage and values that continue to inspire and guide us forward, transforming both us and those we serve. We invite you to be drawn into our unfolding story – a journey of faith, determination, resilience and service that has defined our mission for over 150 years.

8 Touching Humanity: Sister Linda Reicks

Sister Linda Reicks embraces her ministry of massage therapy as a way to connect with others through the power of touch. Through her hands and heart, Sister Linda tends the flame of Nano's legacy – keeping it alive, and illuminating the path of healing for others.

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Presentation Sisters and associates initiated scholarships and awards to further our foundress Nano Nagle's legacy of education and her desire to serve. Read about our well-deserved recipients for 2025.

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Taking Pope Francis' lead in advocating for immigrants worldwide, the Presentation community supports and works towards fair immigration policies.

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As the Presentation Associate Partnership program celebrates 25 years, sisters and associates honor those who helped shape its beginnings and give thanks for the spirit that continues to tend its light today.

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150 Trees for 150 Years: Tending Our Earth

As the Sisters of the Presentation celebrate 150 years of service, we honor our deep commitment to caring for Earth. To celebrate this milestone, we invite you to participate in our "150 Trees for 150 Years" initiative by either planting or sponsoring a tree.



The sisters enjoyed a sneak preview of Judie Chalmer's engaging performance of Nano Nagle, Path Through the Dark. What a gift it was for the sisters who were unable to attend the performances at Clarke University to be able to enjoy Nano come to life before their eyes! Left to right: Judie Chalmers (Nano) with Sisters Emilie Bormann, Therese Corkey, Anne McCormick and Linus Coyle. (Photo credit: Erin LaBelle)



by JOETTA VENNEMAN, PBVM

150 Years of Tending the Light

This year, Presentation Sisters around the world celebrate 250 years since the founding of our congregation by Nano Nagle, who is known across Ireland and globally as the "woman of the lantern." Our courageous Nano, who was born into Irish wealth in 1718, lived most of her life under penal laws that severely restricted the rights of Catholics in Ireland such as forbade them to purchase land, hold public office and bring up children as Catholics, to name a few.

While enduring family deaths, being deeply moved by paupers at the church door in the early morning and by her sister's selling of her valuable bolt of silk cloth to feed the hungry, Nano heard the call to care for the poor of Ireland, specifically Catholic children. She opened a school to educate these children in secret, knowing imprisonment was a consequence of violating penal laws. Within 10 years, demand for education was so great that Nano had established seven schools. As children spoke of those who were sick, Nano braved the dark and treacherous streets with her lantern to visit the sick and care for the poverty stricken wherever they lived. Long days and many walks through dark lanes took a toll on her health. The lantern light was passed on in 1784 to be tended by those with passion for Nano's mission of reaching out with radical hospitality.

Nano Nagle, Path Through the Dark, a one-person play recently performed in Dubuque, inspires reflection upon Nano's journey. The story calls all to tend this light in their own time and place. Dubuque Presentation Sisters celebrate 150 years of tending the light through education, social justice, environmental justice, healthcare, pastoral care and a multiplicity of other ministries. Like Nano, many individuals have taken risks and faced fear. Celebrating our past and the many who have embraced this lantern light, we hear the present and the future call us to continue tending the light by reaching out to tend the needs. We ask, "Where are the dark paths in need of Nano's lantern light today?"

Engaging in today's demanding issues means having a pulse on the signs of the times. As Nano did, we must pick up the lantern to illuminate what is happening in the global arena, in our nation, in our state and in our local area. The light is shining on many social and environmental issues: conflicts and war, immigration, asylum seekers, the hungry, those imprisoned, veterans, those unhoused, those disabled and in need of Medicaid, LGBTQ+ sisters and brothers, children in our educational systems, vulnerable victims of climate change, and many more.

Knowing current needs, what fears and risks need to be taken so that our tending of this lantern light fans into flames? For each person, the risks vary. Yet there is something that each of us can do no matter what our capacity. Like Nano, we are called to reach out in radical hospitality to those living in poverty or sickness, those uneducated, our Earth and anyone oppressed by unjust structures. *Tending the light* means each of us builds individual relationships and networks to address the needs. As needs are met, the lantern light is tended and fanned into an ever-greater flame. As in Nano's times, the needs in our times may seem overwhelming, hopeless and impossible. Tending the light beckons us to overcome our fears and to risk being women and men of hope.

As Raphael Consedine, PBVM, write about Nano in her poem, *Woman of Hope*, "In the face of fear, she chose to be daring, in the face of anxiety, she chose to trust, in the face of impossibility, she chose to begin." What will you choose?

Siter Canner Almandez Sister Rita Manut Mary In Specha Sr. Juster Commun

Sisters Carmen Hernandez, Rita Menart, Mary Lou Specha, Joetta Venneman



Our MISSION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation, are called to evangelize, offering hope and love to our broken world by incarnating the hospitality of God, confronting injustice and working for peace.

Our DIRECTION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, Iowa, Associates and Companions in Mission, are called to live our charism of radical hospitality in response to the cry of women and children made poor, our wounded Earth and all creation.



We invest time, energy and resources to a process of inner work, opening ourselves to personal and communal transformation.

We listen and respond to the cry of women and children and advocate for racial equity and immigration reform.

We foster connections with people and land to nurture healing of our wounded Earth.



Actress Judie Chalmers portrays Presentation foundress Nano Nagle in her production of "Nano Nagle, Path Through the Dark." (Photo credit: Erin LaBelle)

The Life of Nano Nagle Path Through the Dark

by CARMEN HERNANDEZ, PBVM

In mid-March in a dimly-lit theater at Clarke University in Dubuque, the audience is transported into a world of shadows and secrets with the compelling play, *Nano Nagle*, *Path Through the Dark*. This poignant production delves into the depths of human emotion, exploring themes of resilience, determination, hope and Nano Nagle's quest to respond to the needs of women and children amidst the darkness. As the story unfolds, viewers are drawn into a gripping narrative that challenges perceptions and ignites one's imagination.

Path Through the Dark narrates the life of Nano Nagle, presented in the captivating style of an 18th century fairy tale. The play beautifully captures the spirit of Nano and her community of sisters, blending historical facts with captivating theatrical storytelling. Set in the parlor of Nano's home where she spent a large amount of her time, the story reimagines Nano's life with a touch of magic and wonder. The audience sits in attentive silence, captivated as Nano shares her powerful story. Actress Judie Chalmers' portrayal of Nano is a testament to her profound understanding of Nano's journey, highlighting her resilience in the face of adversity and her steadfast dedication to social justice. The story takes the audience on Nano's journey from Ballygriffin, as a child, to Paris, for her education and back to Ireland.

"You cannot engage with Nano's life story for even short periods of time without having a huge shift on you as a woman, especially a woman today," states Judie. "Her story has never been more relevant."



Left to right: Audience members hold candles in reverent silence, symbolizing their role in tending Nano's light and carrying her legacy of compassion and justice into the future. Following the performance, guests gather for conversation and refreshments, sharing their reflections and inspiration sparked by Nano's story. Actress Judie Chalmers, who portrayed Nano Nagle, greets audience members after the play, bringing the beloved foundress to life both on and off stage. (Photo credit: Erin LaBelle)

Actress, writer and director Judie Chalmers created the play, with Ann Dalton, to explore what motivated Nano to establish seven secret schools across Cork City in the 1750s. Judie believes passionately that her profession is to activate change and transform everyday life experiences into moments of truth, power and beauty through the medium of story. Based in Cork City, she has toured both regionally and internationally with her theatrical production of *Nano Nagle, Path Through the Dark*.

Fascinated by how Nano saw the world, Judie shares that she often felt like Nano was looking hundreds of years ahead. She had a vision of what the future could become if young girls received an education, empowering them to change the structure of the society and, in the future, the course of the history of the country.

Inspired by Nano's unwavering courage, Judie states, "For a woman at that time to do what she did – that was truly remarkable, and I wanted to know what drove that kind of courage, that kind of commitment to an ideal. I loved how she never allowed any difficulty to stop her."

Humbled by Nano's unwavering commitment to what was being asked of her, Judie describes how Nano's spirit became a living experience to her while she was researching the production and performing the play. She often felt like Nano was guiding the direction of where the performance needed to go and what it needed to be.

Judie felt a deep connection to Nano from the very beginning of her research process, so much so, that originally, she only meant to direct and write the play. Very quickly Judie realized that Nano was calling her to play the part of Nano. She was never more certain of playing a role in her life as she was at that moment. Now, when life becomes challenging, I find myself thinking, "What would Nano do?" And, without fail, a quiet and certain solution will present itself, and I find myself having the courage to act in alignment with it.

Judie Chalmers

"Creating the play and getting to know Nano and the Presentation community has enriched my life in ways I could not have possibly imagined when I started this journey," expresses Judie. "Now, when life becomes challenging, I find myself thinking, 'What would Nano do?' And, without fail, a quiet and certain solution will present itself, and I find myself having the courage to act in alignment with it."

Following the play, guests gathered for a reception in the atrium of Clarke University where light refreshments were served. The atrium resounded with excitement as guests shared the highlights of the play with one another and their appreciation for the work of the Sisters of the Presentation.

From initiating Presentation Lantern Center, Hotel Hope, La Luz Centro Cultural, H.O.M.E. (Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization) to collaborating with organizations focused on education, anti-human trafficking, environmental sustainability and alleviating poverty, the Dubuque Presentation Sisters remain steadfast in their mission, reaching out to women and children. Inspired by Nano's vision, the sisters continue to pass on her legacy to future generations, nurturing the flame of compassion and service.



The sisters built a new motherhouse on Rush Street in the West Hill neighborhood and moved on December 9, 1879. At the dedication the following July, the motherhouse was named St. Vincent in honor of Mother Vincent Hennessy.

Moving to West Hill & Beyond Our Dubuque Foundation

by HERMANN PLATT, PBVM

A little white house in Key West served as the motherhouse of the Dubuque Presentation Sisters from 1875-1879. To serve the West Hill neighborhood of Dubuque for the 1879-80 school year, a new building housing school and motherhouse was to have been constructed on Rush Street under the direction of Bishop John Hennessy.

The four sisters assigned to teach at the new location found that their intended residence was not ready. A rental property would have to make do for living quarters and classes. On the afternoon of August 31, 1879, Sisters Patricia Reide, Teresa Downey, Alacoque Murray and Ellen Maher arrived at the double brick house on South Dodge Street, later called Bryant Street, where they planned to begin classes the next day. Having secured the key from the owners, they entered the building to find it completely empty. Again, the sisters had to depend on their neighbors for food, fuel and furniture, which were all soon supplied. The next day they saw the yard filled with children eager to greet the sisters, and were likely curious about the new arrivals. After the morning session spent on makeshift desks made of planks laid across stones, the children returned for the afternoon session carrying all kinds of furniture they had ransacked from cellars and attics.

By the second week of classes the enrollment had increased from 63 to more than 100. Many came with textbooks from their former schools. The securing of uniform textbooks by negotiating with publishers was the task of Sister Mary Aloysius Waring, who had been appointed headmistress. This eased the task of teaching. Finally on Tuesday, December 9, 1879, the move to the new motherhouse was underway. The children carried most of the furniture on the trek through the rain and were met by a plank laid from the ground to the front door in lieu of steps. Navigating the slippery slope required balance and agility. "When the Dodge Street Mansion had been emptied, the sisters left, carrying with them their two most precious treasures: a cat and a clock," according to an early annalist.

Damp plaster walls did not lessen the enthusiasm of the new residents. By Saturday morning all was in order. A cook stove had been secured, relieving the neighboring women of the task of bringing in meals.

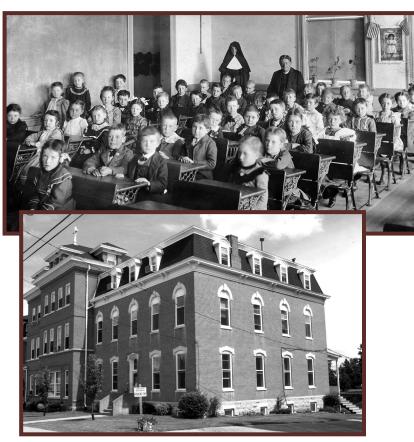
On Monday, December 15, 1879, school opened in the new location in the section of the city called West Hill. That day also the arrival of furniture from Key West signaled the imminent move from the first motherhouse. The move would be repeated two more times as the community expanded over the next 80 years.

Mother Vincent Hennessy had planned to move the novitiate from Key West to Dubuque in the spring when the building would be finished. At the insistence of the bishop the move took place several months earlier than expected. Sister Rosalia Plamondon, in her annals, tells of the effects of the move on the leader of the little community. "The new building on Rush Street was both incomplete and damp. Though she did not complain, she failed visibly after the transfer. As hard as had been the life at Key West to a woman reared in a comfortable home and trained in longestablished convents possessed of all that was necessary for community existence and work, the life at St. Vincent was even harder. There was little privacy on account of the crowded and unfinished condition of the building. Provisions were scarce and funds were low."

Though her failing health was noted by the sisters, all were alarmed on February 15 when she absented herself from the community prayer and other activities. By February 19, pneumonia had taken its toll and Mother Vincent left this earth to take her place among the saints in heaven. The new motherhouse would be named St. Vincent in honor of Mother Vincent.

A replacement had to be designated, and since none of the sisters had been professed long enough to legally vote in a Chapter of Elections, the selection was left to Bishop Hennessy. He appointed Sister Patricia Reide, Mother Vincent's niece, and she remained in office for 15 years. Eventually a procedure for election was devised and terms of office were established.

Under the direction of Sister Patricia and subsequent leaders, St. Vincent went through several transitions over the years. Beginning as a school for the neighboring



Top photo: In 1898, a separate school building to the east was added to St. Vincent. Bottom photo: The property was sold to St. Columbkille Parish in 1930 and the school continues under that name.

Catholic children, it later became a boarding school for girls who came from various places around the county. When it was sold to St. Columbkille Parish in 1930, it returned to its status as a co-ed institution. After a central high school was established in the city, St. Columbkille School became a preschool through eighth grade institution.

The years between 1930 and 1950 saw a period of expansion. Following Nano Nagle's lead in establishing Catholic schools as a priority, the sisters staffed 40 new schools, including 10 outside of Iowa.

The community of sisters also grew, reaching its maximum number of 332 in 1965. The Irish connection continued. Over the years, 31 courageous women ventured from Ireland's shores to join the mission in Dubuque, never expecting to see their families again. The chain was broken in 2009 when Sister Anna Howley, the last of the emigrants, died.

Vatican Council II would have an impact on the way of thinking of mission. Each community was asked to look again at its beginnings to discern how the intent of its founder/ foundress informs today's activities. Much soul-searching, prayer and dialogue set the stage for the future of the community. Nano's social service extended wherever a need was perceived – how could her followers not do the same?



Sister Linda Reicks embraces her ministry of massage therapy as a way to connect with others through the power of touch.

Touching Humanity Sister Linda Reicks

by JOELLEN PRICE, PBVM

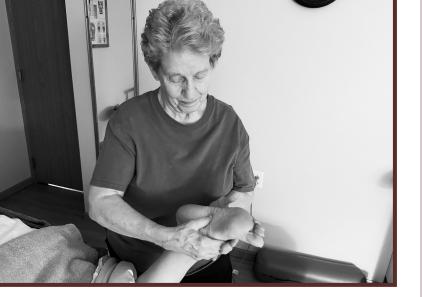
Radical hospitality, the charism of the Sisters of the Presentation, is a living reality for Sister Linda Reicks, as she welcomes her clients into her business and ministry named Touching Humanity Therapeutic Massage, established over 30 years ago in the area of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. After teaching second graders for many years in various schools, Sister Linda studied massage therapy. Shortly thereafter, she was teaching students in training to be massage therapists at Carlson College in Anamosa, Iowa.

Sister Linda recently observes, "As we celebrate our 150th anniversary, I realize that I am personally 'tending the light' inspired by our foundress Nano Nagle. I keep the spark of light, love and healing alive in all those I touch."

"Every moment I spend with the clients who entrust their health and healing to me, I feel blessed to share comfort and support with them," expresses Sister Linda. As one enters her therapy room, a sign on the wall is a reminder of the depths of what one's experience with Sister Linda can be. It reads:

MASSAGE THERAPY is TOUCHING. It is touching the BODY ... its intricate designs of structure and form. It is touching the MIND ... its delicate balance of thoughts and emotions. It is touching the SPIRIT... and merging all three even if it is just for a moment.

MASSAGE THERAPY is ... TOUCHING HUMANITY.



"One of the biggest things I have learned from working with the clients that come to me is to listen to their story," shares Sister Linda. "Listen to what they are not saying and are afraid to share or accept. While listening with my own heart and ears, I also listen with my hands as I place them on their body. This is where some of the stories are brought forth that they were not so eager to share earlier. Sometimes these stories are felt, heard and expressed in words and/or tears."

Sister Linda, daughter of Ray and Rita Reicks, comes from Carroll, Iowa. Her love of her Presentation community shines forth in this comment: "I have learned much through my years of being a member of the Sisters of the Presentation. The most recent is that every day is a gift, to be opened, held and shared with everyone I pass." She often reflects on the life of Jesus, especially Jesus the healer.

Currently, Sister Linda is "touching humanity" not only through her massage therapy ministry but as a volunteer for Respite Care by offering compassion, presence and a listening heart to individuals who have been diagnosed with dementia. "What I learn from each person I am blessed to sit with is how fragile life is, and how we need to cherish each day we are given and each moment within that day."

At the end of each day, Sister Linda spends time debriefing the moments she shared with her clients that day. She recalls the life and ministry of Nano Nagle and Mother Vincent Hennessy and how she too, lifted the "lantern" and went "one pace beyond" in her work of therapeutic massage and her presence to those who receive her loving touch.

Just as Nano walked the shadowed streets of Cork carrying her lantern to bring light to those in need, Sister Linda carries that same light into the lives of those she serves through touch, empathy and radical hospitality. Her ministry of "touching humanity" is not only a reflection of her deep love for her Presentation community, but also a living testament to Nano's vision. Through her hands and her heart, Sister Linda tends the flame of Nano's legacy – keeping it alive, and illuminating the path of healing for others.

The Annals of Dubuque Presentation Community

by JOEL THORESON, ARCHIVIST

The only sources for much of what we know of the early history of the Dubuque Presentation Sisters comes to us through the annals of the congregation. By definition, annals are first-hand sources, written day to day, recording the ongoing life and work of the organization. The early annals we have are not this, however. They are instead later histories written many years after the events described, primarily based it seems on the memories of those still in the congregations or from stories that were passed down for years before being recorded. Also, rather than have one official annals, we have several different versions of the early stories of the congregation.

The earliest attempt at annals by the community has been credited to Mother Josephine Howley, but the title page states that it may have been given to Mother Josephine by Sister M. Angela Crowley in September 1895. The volume has a brief history from 1874-1879, and lists of sisters through 1903, but several written pages were removed from the volume at some point.

Mother Francis Bannon's annals are dated July 29, 1913, and recount the entire history from Bishop John Hennessy's visit in Mooncoin. The last few pages include information up to 1922. Mother Francis (1857-1927) was born in Chicago and entered the community in 1877. Another history of the community, written in 1926, is credited to an early, unnamed sister. Based on use of the first person in parts of the manuscript and the few early sisters still living in 1926, Sister Kevin Cummings surmised that this work may also be that of Mother Francis.

Sister M. Genevieve Burke composed two handwritten copy books of Presentation history around 1916. Sister Rosalia Plamondon compiled her annals in 1933, again beginning with Bishop Hennessy's visit to Mooncoin through the golden jubilee in 1925. Mother Mary Benedict Murphy composed an account of the congregation's history in 1949, and Sister Vivia Cranny also did so in 1964.

There are also brief histories of miscellaneous events and missions. Since 1991, annual annals have been compiled by the community archivist. These attempt to record events as they happen, rather than retrospectively reflect on the history.

Exceptional Individuals Honored Scholarships & Awards

by JANE BUSE-MILLER, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR *and* RADIE ROBERTS, ASSOCIATE PARTNERSHIP CO-DIRECTOR

In 2010, the Sisters of the Presentation instituted a number of scholarships and awards to further the educational bequest of the congregation's foundress, Nano Nagle. In the spirit of her desire to serve, the sisters are delighted to honor the following recipients.

Nano Nagle College Scholarship

The Nano Nagle College Scholarship recognizes high school seniors who live out the Presentation spirit of compassion, leadership and service. This year's recipient, **Isabella Waechter**, a senior at Bishop Garrigan High School in Algona, Iowa, is being honored for her inspiring commitment to community and faith.



From organizing a karaoke fundraiser in third grade to singing

Isabella Waechter

at care centers during COVID-19, Isabella has always found joy in giving back. "Helping a neighbor has always felt like second nature," she shares. "Community work has never been a question or choice – it's simply a part of who I am."

This year, Isabella led a "Backpack Project" as part of her school's mission trip to Mississippi. Partnering with Dubuque Franciscan Sisters, she organized a fundraiser to provide school supplies for underserved learning centers. With the help of her school and community, she quadrupled her fundraising goal, donating over 36 backpacks, teacher kits and additional funds.

Father Zach Jones, Bishop Garrigan chaplain, praised her initiative: "She saw a need and rallied her peers to meet it – humbly and without seeking attention."

Isabella's dedication extends to tutoring, mentoring and music ministry. She plans to study speech pathology and American Sign Language at the University of Iowa. She states, "This path lets me combine my love of music, empathy and passion for working with children in a way that serves others and, ultimately, God."

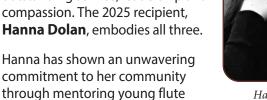
Through her quiet leadership and deep compassion, Isabella carries forward Nano Nagle's legacy – lighting the way for others.

Service helps me find a sense of belonging wherever I go.

Hanna Dolan, Scholarship Recipient

Mother Vincent Hennessy Foundation Scholarship

Each year, the Mother Vincent Hennessy Foundation Scholarship honors a Wahlert Catholic High School senior who demonstrates outstanding service, leadership and compassion. The 2025 recipient, **Hanna Dolan**, embodies all three.



Hanna Dolan

players, tutoring Spanish and providing free or reduced-rate babysitting to families in need. "Watching children grow and develop has been a beautiful gift," she reflects. "It has given me a strong sense of fulfillment and purpose in life."

A well-rounded student, Hanna has maintained a 4.0 GPA, earned a 33 ACT score and currently excels in her EMT coursework while having a full course load with her high school studies. "Hanna is a standout in class," shares Sandy Neyen of Paramount EMS Academy. "She demonstrates enthusiasm for learning and takes initiative."

A gifted musician, Hanna has earned top honors in state competitions and was selected for the Iowa All-State Band. Her flute teacher, Micki Marolf, describes her as hardworking, responsible and determined to succeed.

In the fall, Hanna will attend the University of Iowa with plans to major in biochemistry and molecular biology, and minor in psychology while remaining active in music and mentorship. "Service helps me find a sense of belonging wherever I go," she says.

Hanna's compassionate spirit and quiet leadership beautifully reflects the legacy of Mother Vincent Hennessy.

My mom has worked incredibly hard and sacrificed so much for my brother and me. I want to embody that same work ethic.

Adrian Bobadilla-Santana, Scholarship Recipient

Presentation Associate Partnership Scholarships

Since 2020, Presentation associates have sponsored annual associate scholarships as a way to demonstrate a commitment to the Presentation mission and offer support for the sisters and their ministries. The scholarships are intended for individuals associated with the following ministries supported by the Sisters of the Presentation: La Luz Centro Cultural in Hampton, Iowa; Hotel Hope in New Orleans, Louisiana; Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque, Iowa; and H.O.M.E (Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization) in rural Iowa. Congratulations to the seven scholarship recipients awarded in 2025!

Adrian Bobadilla-Santana – La Luz Centro Cultural

Adrian Bobadilla-Santana aspires to become a technology specialist. In his application, he states, "My goal is to assist people not just now, but also in the future. This scholarship would help me pay for my education, specifically covering the cost of books for my classes. I come from a single-parent household. My mother has some savings, but I will have to pay with grants, loans and scholarships. Additionally, I



Adrian Bobadilla-Santana

want to support my family. My mom has worked incredibly hard and sacrificed so much for my brother and me to ensure we have a better life and achieve our dreams. She is a dedicated worker, and I want to embody that same work ethic. I believe that the harder you work, the better your life can be. Ultimately, all my hopes and dreams revolve around becoming a technology specialist and helping my family."

Valeria Gonzalez, of La Luz Centro Cultural, indicates in her recommendation letter, "Adrian will be a first-generation college student and helping him navigate this financial barrier would help get him to the next step. Adrian has dreams of pursuing the technology specialist degree program, which is a two-year career program that will provide a skill to enter the workforce."

Ana Cortes - HOME

Ana Cortes, a senior in high school, reflects in her application, "As a first-generation student, I come from a low-income background. Although my family would try to help me with college, the cost is far beyond what we can afford. This scholarship would help alleviate this burden, allowing me to focus on my studies without constant financial stress. I want to be a source of support for others during their most vulnerable moments. I



Ana Cortes

aspire to be the person who holds space for individuals in need, helping them find strength and healing while reminding them that kindness still exists in the world. I believe that combining my passion for helping others with my interest in science will allow me to make a meaningful impact in the field of healthcare. After high school, I plan on going to a four-year college and then applying to medical school to become a doctor."

Ana plans to use the funding to cover tuition, books and educational supply expenses.

Dania Larios – La Luz Centro Cultural

Dania Larios is in her second year attending Drake University and on track to go into the Drake pharmacy school, class of 2029. Dania keeps herself busy with several campus clubs while working on campus.

Dania explains in her application, "I am applying for this scholarship because I need any extra help I can get to help me pay for my education. I plan to use the money



Dania Larios

from this scholarship towards my tuition payments. I work multiple on-campus jobs and had a paid internship last semester to help me pay for that semester, but I still came up short. I recently got a job at Hy-Vee Pharmacy that will help me with my payments, and it is related to my major, so I am excited to start there.

I dream of helping people with my skills and to further the development of reproductive health studies. I want to be confident in the skills I learn in school and use those skills to help people who are underserved in the community. I hope to be able to help provide for my family and not feel confined to my financial situation. I dream of living a prosperous life with my family and friends."

Ivan Gopei – La Luz Centro Cultural

Ivan Gopei is 18 years old and was born in Kharkiv, Ukraine. He left his home country with his family of five due to the war in Ukraine. Ivan expresses, "Today, my family is in a challenging situation, mainly because our temporary protected status has not yet been extended. My parents and I cannot work until it is extended. That said, I must cover my tuition for two years. This scholarship will help me get a higher education and build a successful future.



Ivan Gopei

My family, like many other Ukrainians, was affected by the war in Ukraine that happened. We lost all our belongings and have nowhere to return as our houses were destroyed. Coming to the U.S. was a very massive hope for us. We hope to have a better life, which we lost due to the war. My dream is to get my first full-time job as a software engineer in some big tech company. Overall, I have a hope that even after we lost everything, I will be able to help my parents out and make it easy for my siblings to achieve their personal goals, and make it easier for my brother and sister than it was for me."

Kenia Chacon-Morales - HOME

Kenia Chacon-Morales, a senior in high school, explains, "I am applying for the scholarship because it will help me for college and that is what the money is going to be used for, to pay for materials or tuition. My family is hard working. This is the reason why I am applying as it could help my family in a way. In my future, I see myself going to college and maybe getting two degrees. After college, I see myself being in a stable job and



Kenia Chacon-Morales

helping my parents so they don't have to work anymore."

In her letter of support, Sister Paula Schwendinger says, "Kenia is grateful to be in school and works hard. I know she is very mindful of how difficult things are for her parents. Kenia mentioned that she would like to go to a four-year college but is aware that the expense is more than her parents can handle. She wants to study radiation technology, and work in the X-ray department at a hospital. She told me that she would be finished with that in one and a half years and then wants to pursue another degree as a medical associate. It is my perception that Kenia is very shy and reserved, but focused on her future, and making good choices." Even after we lost everything, I will be able to help my parents out and make it easy for my siblings to achieve their personal goals.

Ivan Gopei, Scholarship Recipient

Nubia – Presentation Lantern Center

Nubia came to the U.S. in 2014 from Brazil, where her mother and three siblings remain. Her father died in 2021. In 2018, Nubia brought her seven-year-old nephew to the U.S. to take care of him after his father died by suicide and the boy's behavior worsened at home. Only in her 20s, she was suddenly in the position of being a single mother.



Nubia

Nubia explains, "I earned my U.S.

citizenship in 2019. I am solely responsible for myself financially. I work full-time as a CNA but I find it difficult to make ends meet and also continue schooling for a RN degree. This scholarship would help me meet these expenses. Because I will also be required to do clinicals and it will be impossible for me to work full-time as I do now. It brings me joy to care for people who cannot care for themselves. Often I work with people who are near the end of their life. I can give back to them and offer them dignity in their final days. This is the first job I ever had where I feel I am making a difference in people's lives. My hope is to also improve my current situation."

Robensen Michel – Presentation Lantern Center

Robensen Michel, from Haiti, has been living in lowa for 15 months. In his application, he states, "I came to the United States to survive, because I'm from an environment led by political problems and gangs. I try to help my family who are living now in Haiti."

In his letter of support, Thomas Boxleiter, MD, writes, "I find Robensen to be intelligent,

enthusiastic and motivated. He has a strong moral compass and is compassionate. I support his application for the scholarship. He would use the funds to pursue further education. He hopes to enroll in the medical laboratory technician program."



Robensen Michel



Left to right: Megan Ruiz, executive director of the Presentation Lantern Center, stands alongside individuals going into mandatory immigration check-ins in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Sister Richelle Friedman answers questions about her trip to the U.S. border. Sisters Marge Healy and Richelle Friedman participate in a rally outside of Representative Ashley Hinson's office in Dubuque.

Advocating for Vulnerable Immigrant Populations

by DAVE MCDERMOTT, JUSTICE PROMOTER

The Dubuque Sisters of the Presentation were founded by Irish immigrants to help educate fellow recent immigrants to the Dubuque area. For 150 years this legacy of supporting immigration and immigrants has been a core part of the fabric of the Presentation community.

Taking Pope Francis' lead in advocating for immigrants worldwide, the Presentation community supports fair immigration policies that include legalization for undocumented individuals and a path to citizenship. They push for environmental policies that protect people in other countries, reducing the need for them to leave their homes.

Women and Children Justice Team

The Presentation justice team focusing on women and children has decided that working for immigrants and on immigration policy will be the focus of their work this year. The justice team has met with local and state representatives, attended "Know Your Rights" training, participated in rallies and have been active in letter writing and phone calls to federal representatives.

Sister Richelle Friedman and Presentation associate Donna Ewy spent a week at the U.S./Mexico border at the Kino Border Initiative. On Wednesday, February 5, Sister Richelle gave a presentation on her experience at the border and the people she met there. She shares this from her experience, "When we asked an immigrant family what they wanted us to tell others about them, the mother replied, 'We are good people. We care about our families." When we interact with, spend time with and allow migrants into our lives, we soon discover that – despite the mishaps, mistreatment and accumulated pain – they are individuals who keep hope alive.

Kino Border Initiative

Reflecting on the call to compassionate action, Sister Richelle borrows Pope Francis' words to express the commitment required: "The faith-filled community must always be prepared to defend the rights of those who are most vulnerable, opening wide its doors to welcome them, lest anyone ever be robbed of the hope of a better future."

Sister Richelle offers a powerful perspective shared by the staff at Kino Border Initiative: "When we interact with, spend time with and allow migrants into our lives, we soon discover that – despite the mishaps, mistreatment and accumulated pain – they are individuals who keep hope alive."

The Women and Children Justice Team hopes to help shift the narrative around immigrants and advocate for policies that uphold their dignity and rights. Together, we work to create a more just and compassionate society for all.



Dubuque area associates from the congregations of the Sisters of Charity, BVM; Sisters of St. Francis and Sisters of the Presentation pose with the blankets created for the Iowa City Ronald McDonald House.

Celebrating the Past, Present While Embracing the Future

by RADIE ROBERTS, ASSOCIATE PARTNERSHIP CO-DIRECTOR

Change is difficult, but out of ashes something new and vital can arise. Recently the Conference of Associates and Religious of the Midwest Area (CARMA) disbanded, but the local Dubuque area associate leaders made the decision to continue meeting in person in Dubuque to offer support to one another. This group includes associate leaders of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sisters of Charity (BVM) and Sisters of the Presentation.

In November 2024, the group participated in an all-day retreat led by Sister Mary Ann Zollman, BVM. Out of this experience the idea arose to bring together Dubuque associates from various religious communities. The specific service project to accomplish this task was a tie blanket making event. Proceeds were donated to the Ronald McDonald House in Iowa City which provides a free place to stay for families who travel for children's medical care at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital. On Saturday, February 8, 2025, 25 participants gathered. At the event, volunteers talked and met new people while their hands were busy creating tie blankets for families in need.

One participant states, "In a world that often feels fragmented, coming together with others who share our values to serve a greater good reminded me why we began this journey in the first place. The tie blanket project was more than service – it was a beautiful symbol of connection, renewal and the enduring spirit of community."

Another participant deeply reflects on the meaning behind the gathering and the service project, "As we tied each knot, I could not help but think of the generations of sisters and associates who laid this foundation. This gathering felt like a bridge – honoring their legacy while weaving something new and hopeful for the future."



Blessed Be the Ties that Bind

Dear Comforter, Grant that the recipient of this blanket be enfolded in your healing love and be granted the warmth of your peace.

Amen.





Left to right: Once tie blankets were assembled, the group prayed this prayer over each blanket. Area associate directors, Sister Rita Waters, RSM, Nancy Knipper, Radie Roberts and Suzie Coulthard gather for a photo opportunity. Some of the first newlycommissioned associates are received by the Presentation community on June 16, 2000.

During 2025, the Associate Partnership Office celebrates 25 years of the associate program with the Dubuque Presentation community. When the Presentation program first began, Sister Mary Lou Specha was asked to assume leadership of this new position. A group of three sisters and three lay women comprised the first Associate Process Advisory Committee. This group worked with Sister Mary Lou to brainstorm, research and design what the Dubuque Presentation Associate Process would look like. Out of this hard work came the decision to create an orientation manual for those interested in the program. Several sisters were asked to create "lessons" on topics such as heritage, charism, mission, prayer, community and discernment. Once the manual was created, an invitation was extended to those who might desire such a relationship with the sisters, such as family members, former students and former community members. In 2007, the program was renamed the Presentation Associate Partnership.

The associate program can trace its humble beginnings back to an invitation in October of 1992 to consider "neighboring." Sisters, friends, relatives and acquaintances of the Sisters of the Presentation were invited to give serious thought to a deeper and more committed way of sharing the vision, spirituality and mission. The first associates, consisted of both men and women, committed to the program in June of 2000.

Over the years, groups were established in Algona, Cedar Falls, Charles City, Dubuque, Forest City and Mason City, all in Iowa; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Kansas City, Kansas; and Chicago, Ilinois. With COVID-19 came the utilization of Zoom as people began working from home, creating an opportunity for associates from different locations to meet via Zoom. Thus began the Zoom associate group in 2021.



For over 25 years, many sisters and associates have generously given their time, talent and energy to the associate program, the Associate Advisory Committee, their personal associate groups and community committees focusing on radical hospitality, social justice, non-violence and sustainability, to name a few.

The Presentation community is especially grateful to those who served as co-directors of the Associate Partnership: Sister Mary Lou Specha, Char McCoy, Billie Greenwood, Karla Berns, Sister Lynn Mary Wagner, Carol Witry, Sister Joan Brincks, Cindy Pfiffner and Colleen Venter, and current co-directors Radie Roberts and Sister Rita Waters, RSM.

As we celebrate 25 years of the Presentation Associate Partnership, we honor those who helped shape its beginnings and give thanks for the spirit that continues to tend its light today. The tie blanket project, born from collaboration and shared purpose, is more than a moment of service – it is a symbol of what's possible when area congregations come together in faith, creativity and love. Rooted in a rich history and inspired by new possibilities, the Presentation Associate Partnership moves forward with hope, compassion and a deep commitment to walk with others in the spirit of Nano.

In Loving Memory Associate Msgr. Ed Lechtenberg

September 17, 1926 – January 6, 2025

Reverend Monsignor Edward Lechtenberg, 98, a Presentation associate since June 2009, passed away on January 6, 2025. With his passing, we have lost a much beloved pastor, a kind and gentle man who exemplified the grace of God in every friendly conversation, sermon and correspondence in which he engaged.



Msgr. Ed Lechtenberg

Father Ed was born September 17, 1926, in Lansing, lowa, to Joseph and Mary (Foley) Lechtenberg. In his senior year of high school, toward the end of WWII, Father Ed intended to join the Navy, but he was encouraged to explore his other calling of priesthood. Following graduation from Loras College in Dubuque, he entered Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, and was ordained on May 3, 1951, at Christ the King Chapel at Loras. During the next 49 years, he served as pastor in many places throughout the Dubuque archdiocese before retiring in 2000. In 1991, he was named a Monsignor, an honor appointed by the pope at the request of the local bishop.

In applying to the Presentation Associate Partnership, Father Ed stated, "I have enjoyed many years of friendship with the Presentation Sisters. I see their example, their enthusiasm, their dedication to service, to Christ and to the Church. Their whole mission is so encompassing of the needs of the world that I want to be part of it."

And indeed, Father Ed lived out that mission to be a positive influence on every person he encountered and to let each person know that they are loved. He told his nephew, "Every morning when I say my prayers, I simply ask God, 'What can I do to honor you today?'"

In Loving Memory Associate Rita Plathe

December 27, 1925 – January 7, 2025

Associate Rita Plathe, 99, of Algona, Iowa, passed away on January 7, 2025. She was born December 27, 1925, the youngest of five children to John and Annie Thul of Bode, Iowa. Rita attended St. Joseph Elementary School and graduated from St. Joseph High School in 1943. In 1946, she married Milford Plathe of Irvington, Iowa.



Rita Plathe

After his death in 1968, Rita remained on their farm while raising their five children through college, continuing to farm 500 acres of corn and soybeans.

Rita was a devout Catholic, attending daily Mass, praying the rosary daily and beginning a rosary group at her retirement center in Algona. She played the church organ, sang in the choir and belonged to the Catholic Daughters of America. When she moved to Algona, she lived across from St. Cecelia Catholic Church and served as secretary at Seton Elementary School for 18 years. Rita became a Presentation associate on October 9, 2003.

Rita loved to travel and did so extensively throughout the United States, Israel and Europe. She was an avid gardener; her beautiful flowers kept the altars at St. Joseph Church adorned in glory. She was a competitive card player and did not go lenient, even when the opponents were her children! Rita delighted in her role as grandmother to her 10 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.

Rita's memory and love will be forever in the hearts of all who knew her.

Presentation Associate Identity Statement

Dubuque Presentation associates are women and men called to share in the life, spirituality and mission of the Dubuque Presentation Sisters. Grounded in prayer, we support and encourage one another as we seek to embody the Presentation charism of radical hospitality both individually and communally. In the spirit of Nano Nagle, we reach out with hospitality and compassion as we seek justice and respond to the needs of the world.



Sisters Ngan Thi Mai, Rita Menart, Carmen Hernandez, Therese Corkery, Hoa Nguyen, Joellen Price and Nga Thi Phan attend the celebration at Divine Word College recognizing the Sisters of the Presentation with the Fr. John Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service.

Fr. John Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service

On April 6, the Sisters of the Presentation were recognized, along with the Sisters of St. Francis and the Sisters of Charity, BVM, by Divine Word College with the Fr. John Donaghey Award for Outstanding Service for their remarkable contributions to the lives of the students at Divine Word College.

The award was established to publicly recognize and thank those who have significantly strengthened Divine Word's mission of educating young men and women for missionary service. Divine Word President Reverend Thomas J. Ascheman, SVD, states, "Your congregation is being recognized for the generous welcome and hospitality you have extended to religious women who study at Divine Word College. Your kindness and support have made a profound impact, fostering a spirit of community and encouragement that enriches the lives of our students."

Sister Carmen Hernandez, accepting the award on behalf of the Presentation community, expresses, "This recognition celebrates the past 12 years during which we have had the privilege of sharing our home with the Dominican Sisters and the Lovers of the Holy Cross Sisters from Vietnam. To us, this isn't simply an act of service - it is an extension of the hospitality that is woven into the fabric of our identity as Presentation Sisters. Having our Vietnamese sisters live To us, this isn't simply an act of service – it is an extension of the hospitality that is woven into the fabric of our identity as Presentation Sisters.

Sister Carmen Hernandez

with us has been an extraordinary blessing. They bring vibrancy, resilience and their rich culture into our lives. Together, we have exchanged stories, strengthened our connections, and even delighted in sharing their beloved egg rolls – a communal favorite!"

"Despite their long days of commuting to Divine Word College and immersing themselves in rigorous studies of English, theology of mission and international relations, the Vietnamese sisters still find ways to enrich the Presentation community," states Sister Carmen. "Their participation in Vietnamese celebration days has brought such joy and depth to our shared community. Their presence reminds us daily of the beauty and strength found in living and growing together. They have widened our world and strengthened our sense of shared purpose."



Sisters, associates and employees participate in planting a commemorative tree on the grounds of the Sisters of the Presentation. Dubuque Trees Forever plant a tree at Alta Vista High School in Dubuque in honor of the "150 Trees for 150 Years" initiative. Caryen and Randall Rambis of Sequim, Washington, plant a tree in honor of the Sisters of the Presentation's 150th anniversary. Caryen (not pictured) is the sister of Sister Carmen Hernandez.

150 Trees for 150 Years Tending Our Earth

by KAREN TUECKE, PARTNERS IN MISSION COORDINATOR

As the Sisters of the Presentation celebrate 150 years of service, we honor our deep commitment to caring for Earth. Throughout our anniversary year, we will recognize our connections where sisters have ministered with tree plantings within these communities. The legacy of a tree outlives those who plant it, serving as a powerful symbol of how the legacy of our congregation has grown, flourished and extended far beyond those who first sowed the seeds of faith 150 years ago.

How You Can Participate

To celebrate this milestone, we invite you to participate in our "150 Trees for 150 Years" initiative by either planting a tree or sponsoring one. Each tree represents our ongoing dedication to fostering a sustainable future. A leaf with your name will be added to our tree display with your planting or sponsorship. You can track our progress toward 150 trees by visiting our website to see the impact of your participation. Join us in growing a lasting legacy!

Plant a Tree

Choose a location that is significant to you – whether it is in your backyard, a community space or a cherished spot. As trees are planted, we want to be part of this initiative by offering our prayers and support. We ask that you share a photo and details of your planting by emailing info@dbqpbvms.org so we can send you a suggested blessing for the tree and track our progress towards our goal of planting 150 trees.

Sponsor a Tree

If planting a tree isn't an option for you, please consider sponsoring one. Your sponsorship allows us to plant a tree on your behalf in an area that needs it most.

Join Us in This Collective Effort

Taking part is simple! Choose how you would like to participate and scan the QR code below with your cell phone camera. Fill out the online form and submit your information.



Feel more comfortable contacting us? No problem! Call Karen Tuecke at 563-588-2008 ext. 109 or email partnersinmission@dbqpbvms.org and she will get you signed up!

You can also visit https://dbqpbvms.org/150-trees-150-years



Featured below are special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation Sisters and associates.



Celebrating 100 & 105 Years of Wisdom

We joyfully celebrated Sister Linus Coyle's 100th birthday and Sister Damian O'Brien's 105th birthday! Two lives filled with faith, love and unwavering dedication to serving others, Sisters Linus and Damian continue to inspire and bless us with their gentle spirit and deep wisdom.



SHOW LOVE. OFFER HOPE. LIVE HOSPITALITY. **EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY**

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Contact vocations@dbqpbvms.org



PLEASE CONNECT WITH US.

For updated information about the activities and events of the Sisters of the Presentation, visit our website at www.dbqpbvms.org or call 563.588.2008.

PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

April 26, 2025

Associate Partnership Commitments Robert Gardner Connie McDermott Terry McDermott Debbie Gross Kris Hermsen Laura Ryan Ripley

25th Anniversary Silver Dinner

June 1, 2025 Associate Partnership Commitments Teresa Anne Koch Terese Veverka Black

June 15-25, 2025 Presentation Pilgrimage to Ireland

July 16, 2025 60th Jubilee Celebration Sister Lynn Marie Fangman Sister Marge Healy Sister Jennifer Rausch

July 17-20, 2025 Community Gathering

21st of each month Pray for Vocations

25th of each month Pray for Benefactors



SISTERS OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY 2360 CARTER ROAD DUBUQUE, IA 52001-2997

Help us keep our database up-to-date. Send changes to info@dbqpbvms.org or call us at 563.588.2008. Thank you.

CONNECT WITH US @DBQPBVMS





I challenge myself to live radical hospitality by being aware of disturbances within self and life and reframing them as an invitation to change so as to radiate radical hospitality as it flows through my person.

Sister Joetta Venneman

Because of the ongoing support of you, our partners, we have been able to help many people through presence, service, hospitality and support who would not otherwise have received assistance. We simply could not do the work we do without your partnership and prayers.

Thank you again for your contributions, continuous support and for trusting us to be good stewards of your generosity. If you have not received the mailed 2024 Annual Report and would like to receive one, contact:

Karen Tuecke Partners in Mission Coordinator 563-588-2008 ext. 109 partnersinmission@dbqpbvms.org

You can also download an electronic copy at dbqpbvms.org/give-back/annual-reports or scan the QR code to the right.

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Radical Hospitality Our Key to Transformation

Radical hospitality holds the power to transform both ourselves and the work At its core, it is the deep practice of opening our hearts to others with love, empathy and generosity.

